



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, August 16, 2005

Utah Reports First Human West Nile Cases for 2005

Everyone in Utah Should Take Precautions Now

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah public health officials report that evidence of West Nile virus (WNV) infection has been detected in four adults from four separate counties (Duchesne, Uintah, Utah and Salt Lake) in Utah. Three individuals had illness compatible with WNV infection. Preliminary positive laboratory results indicated WNV infection. Confirmatory tests are being performed by the Utah Public Health Laboratory. All three individuals are currently recovering, though one individual is hospitalized. In addition, a Salt Lake County blood donor was found to have evidence of WNV infection when the donated blood was tested for the presence of WNV.

Based on travel history, all four individuals were infected in Utah, though it isn't possible to determine exactly where in the state they were infected. One human case in Duchesne County is between the age of 45 and 64 years, the Uintah case is over the age of 65, and the case in Utah County is between 45 and 64 years of age. These probable cases are not unexpected due to the increasing amount of WNV activity in animals and mosquitoes.

The blood donor who was found to have evidence of WNV infection has not developed WNV symptoms. The infected individual is not considered a case because they have not had illness compatible with WNV infection, but their infection does indicate that transmission of the virus to a human occurred. All blood banks in the nation use blood-screening tests for WNV. Blood collection agencies destroy potentially infectious blood. If a person gets West Nile virus, they are deferred from donating blood until all risk of transmitting the virus is gone.

As of August 12, non-human WNV activity detected for 2005 includes:

- Duchesne County – two mosquito pools, three sentinel chickens and one dead bird
- Uintah County – one dead bird, 13 sentinel chickens and eight mosquito pools
- Salt Lake County – one mosquito pool
- Utah County – 14 mosquito pools, two sentinel chickens and three horses
- Washington County – five sentinel chickens and three mosquito pools
- Weber County – one horse

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Preventing mosquito bites is the best way to avoid getting WNV. Utahns can protect themselves from mosquito bites by:

- Using mosquito repellents that contain an effective ingredient, such as DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus* (especially from dusk to dawn).
- Wearing long-sleeve shirts and long pants while outdoors.
- Getting rid of standing water; this is where mosquitoes may live.

* Additional information on efficacy and safety of insect repellants and their active ingredients is available at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm

Most people who are infected with WNV do not show any symptoms. About one in every five have flu-like symptoms with fever, muscle aches, and possibly a rash. While those individuals recover, the illness can be prolonged. About one in 150 develop more severe illness affecting the brain and spinal cord. They may have headache, paralysis, and stiff neck, and may suffer long-lasting or permanent disability. The risk of severe illness increases with age, but there all age groups are at risk of illness.

Staff from the UDOH and the Department of Agriculture and Food, along with local health departments, local mosquito abatement districts, and the Division of Wildlife Resources are all collaborating to track and monitor WNV in Utah. Since March 2005, local mosquito abatement districts have been using all their resources to reduce the number of mosquitoes that can spread the disease. They will continue these efforts throughout the 2005 mosquito season.

For more information, call your local health department or the Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542. For up-to-date information on WNV in Utah, please visit www.health.utah.gov/wnv.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.